BRIEFER ARTICLES

JAMES M. MACOUN

(WITH PORTRAIT)

JAMES M. MACOUN died on January 8, 1920, in Ottawa, Canada. During the previous summer, while exploring Jasper Park and adjoining territory in British Columbia, he was taken ill, and on his return to Ottawa in the fall his condition gradually became worse, until the end came. Being an excellent man and an accomplished naturalist his death will be mourned far beyond the confines of this continent, for



Mr. MACOUN was an exceptionally active man, who kept in constant touch with learned men and institutions nearly all over the world. His career covers a great field. He was born in Brockville in 1862, and when his father, Professor JOHN MACOUN, took charge of the botanical and zoölogical work of the Geological Survey, JAMES MACOUN became his assistant in 1883.

From the time he entered the service, MACOUN specialized in botany, and in addition to other duties assisted Professor JOHN MACOUN in the preparation and publication of over 1200 pages of botanical work, and two editions of an annotated list of the birds of the Dominion. He was appointed Assistant Naturalist in 1898, and Botanist in 1917. Since 1911, when his father moved to British Columbia, much greater responsibility was thrown on him. In 1918, because of his wide knowledge in the different branches of natural history, he was appointed Chief of the

Biological Division to the Geological Survey, and was looking forward to a wider field of public service.

MACOUN'S great ability to do work of a special nature satisfactorily was early recognized in the Geological Survey, and in 1891, when it became necessary to investigate the fur seal fisheries of the Pacific Islands on behalf of Great Britain and Canada, he was chosen by Dr. G. M. DAWSON, then Director of the Geological Survey and Bering Sea Commissioner for Canada, to go with him. His services in the study of the habits and life history of the fur seal proved so valuable that he was retained on this special work in 1892 and 1893, and was sent to Europe as an expert in connection with the fur seal arbitration. In 1896 he was again sent to Bering Sea, and again in 1914. In 1911 he spent 10 weeks in Washington as one of Canada's representatives at the fur seal conference. Because of this special international work he was very highly commended by Lord BRYCE, then British Ambassador at Washington, and received a C.M.G. for his services.

The field work of the staff of the Geological Survey takes the members to many parts of Canada, and mainly to the outlying, or least civilized parts of the Dominion, and during the 36 years of service MACOUN had his full share, enduring in some of the expeditions very severe hardships. As an example it will be remembered that in 1910, while studying the flora and fauna of the west coast of Hudson Bay, the ship which carried him and his party was wrecked, and they had to attempt the return to civilization in a small boat; but fortunately they were rescued and taken to Fort Churchill, from which point the party made the overland trip to Lake Winnipeg on foot, in the depth of winter, reaching the telegraph line after having been almost given up for lost.

As an evidence of the splendid work done by himself and his father, there are now in the possession of the National Herbarium of the Geological Survey, over 100,000 specimens of the flora of Canada. In addition, both men may be named among the founders of the Royal Victoria Museum of Canada, and perhaps half of the bird specimens, numbering about 14,000 in all, were supplied by the MACOUNS.

As a botanist, MACOUN proved himself a keen observer, and the enormous collections which he brought home from his expeditions contain a most excellent foundation for the knowledge of the Canadian flora. He discovered many new species, and his talent to select and prepare specimens so as to represent the variation of a number of plants was unsurpassed. Although he was more familar with the Canadian flora than any other botanist, he contributed but very little in print.

It was always his hope to be able to work up his collections sometime, but not until he had managed to acquire the literature necessary. The botanical library at Ottawa was not sufficiently provided with books in his line of work, and he was too conscientious to publish for the mere sake of publishing. It was a matter of small importance to MACOUN to make new species, he rather disliked it; he took more interest in contributing to the geographical distribution of plants, and his collections in this respect are, to say the least, invaluable. He took great interest in the difficult genus *Carex*, and he knew all the Canadian species at almost any stage of development, indeed all the varieties and forms. We owe to MACOUN the rediscovery of *Carex Franklini* and *C. petricosa*. As a botanical correspondent MACOUN was indefatigable, and one must remember that as Chief of the Biological Division he had to attend to a great amount of routine work.

In private life MACOUN took a deep interest in all questions bearing upon the progress of humanity. He took a keen and active interest in labor and sociological questions, and of late was specially interested in the returned soldier problem. MACOUN made and left many friends, and not the fewest of those who will miss him most are among the great class known as "labor." His death is a severe loss to natural science, and wherever records are given of the progress of natural science in Canada his name will be remembered, for he was one of its founders. His simple mode of life well corresponded with his sincerity as a friend, and his never failing sympathy for the poor.—THEO. HOLM, *Clinton, Md.*